

June 15 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1999

Such instability could damage U.S. exports, with serious repercussions for our workforce and our economy as a whole.

Therefore, the BIS credit facility is providing a crucial supplement to Brazil's IMF-supported program of economic and financial reform. I believe that strong and continued support from the United States, other governments, and multilateral institutions are crucial to enable Brazil to carry out its economic reform program. In

these unique and emergency circumstances, it is both appropriate and necessary to continue to make ESF financing available as needed for more than 6 months to guarantee this BIS credit facility, including any other roll-over or drawing that might be necessary in the future.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 15, 1999.

Remarks to the International Labor Organization Conference in Geneva, Switzerland

June 16, 1999

Thank you very much, Director General Somavia, for your fine statements and your excellent work. Conference President Mumuni, Director General Petrovsky, ladies and gentlemen of the ILO, it is a great honor for me to be here today with, as you have noticed, quite a large American delegation. I hope you will take it as a commitment of the United States to our shared vision and not simply as a burning desire for us to visit this beautiful city on every possible opportunity.

I am delighted to be here with Secretary Albright and Secretary of Labor Herman; with my National Economic Adviser, Gene Sperling, and my National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger. We're delighted to be joined by the president of the American Federation of Labor, the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, and several other leaders of the U.S. labor movement, and with Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, who is the foremost advocate in the United States of the abolition of child labor. I am grateful to all of them for coming with me and to the First Lady and our daughter for joining us on this trip. And I thank you for your warm reception of her presence here.

It is indeed an honor for me to be the first American President to speak before the ILO in Geneva. It is long overdue. There is no organization that has worked harder to bring people together around fundamental human aspirations and no organization whose mission is more vital for today and tomorrow.

The ILO, as the Director General said, was created in the wake of the devastation of World

War I as part of a vision to provide stability to a world recovering from war, a vision put forward by our President, Woodrow Wilson. He said then, "While we are fighting for freedom, we must see that labor is free." At a time when dangerous doctrines of dictatorship were increasingly appealing, the ILO was founded on the realization that injustice produces, and I quote, "unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperiled."

Over time the Organization was strengthened, and the United States played its role, starting with President Franklin Roosevelt and following through his successors and many others in the United States Congress, down to the strong supporters today, including Senator Harkin and the distinguished senior Senator from New York, Patrick Moynihan.

For half a century, the ILO has waged a struggle of rising prosperity and widening freedom, from the shipyards of Poland to the diamond mines of South Africa. Today, as the Director General said, you remain the only organization to bring together governments, labor unions, and business to try to unite people in common cause: the dignity of work; the belief that honest labor, fairly compensated, gives meaning and structure to our lives; the ability of every family and all children to rise as far as their talents will take them. In a world too often divided, this organization has been a powerful force for unity, justice, equality, and shared prosperity. For all that, I thank you.

Now, at the edge of a new century, at the dawn of the information age, the ILO and its

vision are more vital than ever, for the world is becoming a much smaller and much, much more interdependent place. Most nations are linked to the new dynamic, idea-driven, technology-powered, highly competitive international economy.

The digital revolution is a profound, powerful, and potentially democratizing force. It can empower people and nations, enabling the wise and farsighted to develop more quickly and with less damage to the environment. It can enable us to work together across the world as easily as if we were working just across the hall. Competition, communications, and more open markets spur stunning innovation and make their fruits available to business and workers worldwide.

Consider this: Every single day, half a million air passengers, 1.5 billion E-mail messages, and \$1.5 trillion cross international borders. We also have new tools to eradicate diseases that have long plagued humanity, to remove the threat of global warming and environmental destruction, to lift billions of people into the first truly global middle class.

Yet, as the financial crisis of the last 2 years has shown, the global economy with its churning hyperactivity poses new risks, as well, of disruption, dislocation, and division. A financial crisis in one country can be felt on factory floors half a world away. The world has changed, much of it for the better, but too often our response to its new challenges has not changed.

Globalization is not a proposal or a policy choice. It is a fact. But how we respond to it will make all the difference. We cannot dam up the tides of economic change anymore than King Canute could still the waters. Nor can we tell our people to sink or swim on their own. We must find a third way, a new and democratic way, to maximize market potential and social justice, competition and community. We must put a human face on the global economy, giving working people everywhere a stake in its success, equipping them all to reap its rewards, providing for their families the basic conditions of a just society. All nations must embrace this vision, and all the great economic institutions of the world must devote their creativity and energy to this end.

Last May I had the opportunity to come and speak to the World Trade Organization and stress that as we fight for open markets, it must open its doors to the concerns of working people

and the environment. Last November I spoke to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and stressed that we must build a new financial architecture as modern as today's markets, to tame the cycles of boom and bust in the global economy as we can now do in national economies, to ensure the integrity of international financial transactions, and to expand social safety nets for the most vulnerable.

Today I say to you that the ILO, too, must be ready for the 21st century, along the lines that Director General Somavia has outlined.

Let me begin by stating my firm belief that open trade is not contrary to the interest of working people. Competition and integration lead to stronger growth, more and better jobs, more widely shared gains. Renewed protectionism in any of our nations would lead to a spiral of retaliation that would diminish the standard of living for working people everywhere. Moreover, a failure to expand trade further could choke off innovation and diminish the very possibilities of the information economy. No, we need more trade, not less.

Unfortunately, working people the world over do not believe this. Even in the United States, with the lowest unemployment rate in a generation, where exports accounted for 30 percent of our growth, until the financial crisis hit Asia, working people strongly resist new market-opening measures. There are many reasons. In advanced countries the benefits of open trade outweigh the burdens. But they are widely spread, while the dislocations of open trade are painfully concentrated.

In all countries, the premium the modern economy places on skills leaves too many hard-working people behind. In poor countries, the gains seem too often to go to the already wealthy and powerful, with little or no rise in the general standard of living. And the international organizations charged with monitoring and providing for rules of fair trade, and enforcement of them, seem to take a very long time to work their way to the right decision, often too late to affect the people who have been disadvantaged.

So as we press for more open trade, we must do more to ensure that all our people are lifted by the global economy. As we prepare to launch a new global round of trade talks in Seattle, in November, it is vital that the WTO and the ILO work together to advance that common goal.

We clearly see that a thriving global economy will grow out of the skills, the ideas, the education of millions of individuals. In each of our nations and as a community of nations, we must invest in our people and lift them to their full potential. If we allow the ups and downs of financial crises to divert us from investing in our people, it is not only those citizens or nations that will suffer; the entire world will suffer from their lost potential.

It is clear that when nations face financial crisis, they need the commitment and the expertise not only of the international financial institutions; they need the ILO as well. The IMF, the World Bank, and WTO, themselves, should work more closely with the ILO, and this organization must be willing and able to assume more responsibility.

The lesson of the past 2 years is plain: Those nations with strong social safety nets are better able to weather the storms. Those strong safety nets do not just include financial assistance and emergency aid for poorest people; they also call for the empowerment of the poorest people.

This weekend in Cologne, I will join my partners in the G-8 in calling for a new focus on stronger safety nets within nations and within the international community. We will also urge improved cooperation between the ILO and the international financial institutions in promoting social protections and core labor standards. And we should press forward to lift the debt burden that is crushing many of the poorest nations.

We are working to forge a bold agreement to more than triple debt relief for the world's poorest nations and to target those savings to education, health care, child survival, and fighting poverty. I pledge to work to find the resources so we can do our part and contribute our share toward an expanded trust fund for debt relief.

Yet, as important as our efforts to strengthen safety nets and relieve debt burdens are, for citizens throughout the world to feel that they truly have a hand in shaping their future, they must know the dignity and respect of basic rights in the workplace.

You have taken a vital step toward lifting the lives of working people by adopting the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work last year. The document is a blueprint for the global economy that honors our values: the dignity of work, an end to discrimination, an end to forced labor, freedom of association,

the right of people to organize and bargain in a civil and peaceful way. These are not just labor rights; they're human rights. They are a charter for a truly modern economy. We must make them an everyday reality all across the world.

We advance these rights first by standing up to those who abuse them. Today, one member nation, Burma, stands in defiance of the ILO's most fundamental values and most serious findings. The Director General has just reported to us that the flagrant violation of human rights persists, and I urge the ILO governing body to take definite steps, for Burma is out of step with the standards of the world community and the aspirations of its people. Until people have the right to shape their destiny, we must stand by them and keep up the pressure for change.

We also advance core labor rights by standing with those who seek to make them a reality in the workplace. Many countries need extra assistance to meet these standards. Whether it's rewriting inadequate labor laws or helping fight discrimination against women and minorities in the workplace, the ILO must be able to help.

That is why in the balanced budget I submitted to our Congress this year I've asked for \$25 million to help create a new arm of the ILO to work with developing countries to put in place basic labor standards, protections, safe workplaces, the right to organize. I ask other governments to join us. I've also asked for \$10 million from our Congress to strengthen U.S. bilateral support for governments seeking to raise such core labor standards.

We have asked for millions of dollars also to build on our voluntary anti-sweatshop initiative to encourage the many innovative programs that are being developed to eliminate sweatshops and raise consumer awareness of the conditions in which the clothes they wear and the toys they buy for their children are made.

But we must go further to give life to our dream of an economy that lifts all our people. To do that, we must wipe from the Earth the most vicious forms of abusive child labor. Every single day, tens of millions of children work in conditions that shock the conscience. There are children chained to often risky machines, children handling dangerous chemicals, children forced to work when they should be in school preparing themselves and their countries for a better tomorrow. Each of our nations must take responsibility.

Last week, at the inspiration of Senator Tom Harkin, who is here with me today, I directed all agencies of the United States Government to make absolutely sure they are not buying any products made with abusive child labor.

But we must also act together. Today, the time has come to build on the growing world consensus to ban the most abusive forms of child labor, to join together and to say there are some things we cannot and will not tolerate.

We will not tolerate children being used in pornography and prostitution. We will not tolerate children in slavery or bondage. We will not tolerate children being forcibly recruited to serve in armed conflicts. We will not tolerate young children risking their health and breaking their bodies in hazardous and dangerous working conditions for hours unconscionably long, regardless of country, regardless of circumstance. These are not some archaic practices out of a Charles Dickens novel. These are things that happen in too many places today.

I am proud of what is being done at your meeting. In January I said to our Congress and the American people, in the State of the Union Address, that we would work with the ILO on a new initiative to raise labor standards and to conclude a treaty to ban abusive child labor everywhere in the world. I am proud to say that the United States will support your convention. After I return home, I will send it to the U.S. Senate for ratification, and I ask all other countries to ratify it, as well.

We thank you for achieving a true breakthrough for the children of the world. We thank the nations here represented who have made genuine progress in dealing with this issue in their own nations. You have written an important new chapter in our effort to honor our values and protect our children.

Passing this convention alone, however, will not solve the problem. We must also work aggressively to enforce it. And we must address root causes, the tangled pathology of poverty and hopelessness that leads to abusive child labor. Where that still exists, it is simply not enough to close the factories where the worst child labor practices occur. We must also ensure that children then have access to schools and their parents have jobs. Otherwise, we may find children in even more abusive circumstances.

That is why the work of the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor is so important. With the support of the United

States, it is working in places around the world to get children out of the business of making fireworks, to help children move from their jobs as domestic servants, to take children from factories to schools.

Let me cite just one example of the success being achieved, the work being done to eliminate child labor from the soccer ball industry in Pakistan. Two years ago, thousands of children under the age of 14 worked for 50 companies stitching soccer balls full-time. The industry, the ILO, and UNICEF joined together to remove children from the production of soccer balls and give them a chance to go to school, and to monitor the results.

Today, the work has been taken up by women in 80 poor villages in Pakistan, giving them new employment and their families new stabilities. Meanwhile, the children have started to go to school, so that when they come of age, they will be able to do better jobs raising the standard of living of their families, their villages, and their nation. I thank all who were involved in this endeavor and ask others to follow their lead.

I am pleased that our administration has increased our support for IPEC by tenfold. I ask you to think what could be achieved by a full and focused international effort to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Think of the children who would go to school, whose lives would open up, whose very health would flower, freed of the crushing burden of dangerous and demeaning work, given back those irreplaceable hours of childhood for learning and playing and living.

By giving life to core labor standards, by acting effectively to lift the burden of debt, by putting a more human face on the world trading system and the global economy, by ending the worst forms of child labor, we will be giving our children the 21st century they deserve.

These are hopeful times. Previous generations sought to redeem the rights of labor in a time of world war and organized tyranny. We have a chance to build a world more prosperous, more united, more humane than ever before. In so doing, we can fulfill the dreams of the ILO's founders and redeem the struggles of those who fought and organized, who sacrificed and, yes, died for freedom, equality, and justice in the workplace.

It is our great good fortune that in our time we have been given the golden opportunity to make the 21st century a period of abundance and achievement for all. Because we can do

that, we must. It is a gift to our children worthy of the millennium.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the Assembly Hall at the United Nations Building. In his remarks, he referred to Juan Somavia, director general, Alhaji Muhammad Mumuni, conference

president, International Labor Organization; and Vladimir Petrovsky, director general, United Nations Office at Geneva. The President also referred to IPEC, the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor. The Executive order of June 12 on child labor is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Senate Action on Work Incentives Legislation

June 16, 1999

Nearly a year ago, I committed to working with Senators Jeffords and Kennedy to pass the "Work Incentives Improvement Act." In January, in my State of the Union Address, I urged the Congress make this historic, bipartisan legislation a top priority and fully funded it in the budget I sent to Congress. And on June 4th I challenged the Congress to send the work incentives bill to me by July 26th, so I could sign this legislation into law on the ninth anniversary of the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Today, in an overwhelming 99 to 0 vote, the Senate passed the work incentives bill. This impressive vote sends a strong signal that all Americans, including people with disabilities, should have the opportunity to work. Americans with disabilities can and do bring tremendous energy and talent to the American work force, but the unemployment rate for all working-age adults with disabilities is nearly 75 percent. One of

the most glaring problems is that people with disabilities frequently become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they go back to work. This puts people with disabilities in the untenable position of choosing between health care coverage and work. The "Work Incentives Improvement Act" would improve job opportunities for people with disabilities by increasing access to health care and employment services.

Senators Jeffords, Kennedy, Roth, and Moynihan deserve special recognition for their leadership on this historic legislation. I urge the House to follow their lead. Under the leadership of Congressmen Bliley, Dingell, Waxman, and Lazio, I am confident that it will. I also hope and expect the Senate and House to find offsets for this bill that are acceptable to all parties. This bill will provide critical work opportunities to people with disabilities, and I look forward to signing this groundbreaking legislation.

Statement on Proposed Legislation on Immigrant Children's Health Improvement

June 16, 1999

I am pleased that today a bipartisan group of Senators, led by Senators Chafee and McCain and including Senators Graham, Mack, Moynihan, and Jeffords, have taken an important step in ensuring health care coverage for children by introducing the "Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act of 1999."

When I signed the 1996 welfare reform law, I pledged to work toward reversing the unneces-

sary cuts in benefits to legal immigrants that had nothing to do with the goal of moving people from welfare to work. As part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the Agricultural Research Act of 1998, my administration worked with Congress to restore vital health, nutritional, and disability benefits to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable legal immigrants. Recognizing that more needs to be done, my budget includes